

Message Text

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EXDIS

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TAGS: PFOR, TH, US

SUBJECT: RUMOR OF CIA PLOT TO ASSASSINATE THE KING

REF: FBIS BANGKOK D050240Z JAN 74

SUMMARY: PRINCIPAL PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE KING, THAWISAN LADAWAN, CALLED ON ME ON JANUARY 5 TO DISCUSS A RUMOR OF CONCERN TO THE KING THAT CIA WAS PLOTTING TO ASSASSINATE THE KING AND RESTORE A MILITARY GOVERNMENT. THE ALLEGED PLOT INVOLVED U.S.-EDUCATED THAI UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS. I BELIEVE THAT I MADE CONSIDERABLE HEADWAY IN CONVINCING THAWISAN THAT THE RUMORS ARE BASELESS AND THAT THE U.S. WAS SOLIDLY BEHIND THE KING IN IMPROVING THE DEMOCRATIC FUTURE OF AN INDEPENDENT THAILAND. END SUMMARY.

1. THAWISAN LADAWAN, PRINCIPAL PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE KING, CALLED ON ME JANUARY 5. HE WANTED TO DISCUSS A RUMOR WHICH HE SAID WAS RAMPANT--AND ABOUT WHICH THE KING WAS CONCERNED--OF A CIA PLOT TO ASSASSINATE THE KING AND RESTORE A MILITARY GOVERNMENT IN THAILAND. HE SAID 16 INDIVIDUALS WERE INVOLVED, SEVERAL OF THEM UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS FROM THAMMASAT AND ELSEWHERE. HE REPORTED THAT AT A MEETING HELD IN A BANGKOK NIGHTCLUB A VOTE WAS TAKEN WITHIN THE GROUP. OF ITS MEMBERS, NINE WERE IN FAVOR AND SEVEN AGAINST ASSASSINATION.

2. I REPLIED THAT I WAS SORRY THAT SUCH A SILLY RUMOR WAS CIRCULATING IN BANGKOK. LONG BEFORE COMING TO THAILAND, I HAD PERSONALLY DEVELOPED A PROFOUND RESPECT FOR HIS MAJESTY
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(THE TERM I EMPLOYED IN THIS CONVERSATION) AND REGARD HIM AS THE MOST IMPORTANT AND CONSTRUCTIVE FORCE IN THAILAND. A MONTH AFTER MY ARRIVAL, I CABLED TO WASHINGTON MY FIRST APPRAISAL OF THE LOCAL SITUATION, COMMENTING ON THE INDISPENSABLE

ROLE THAT THE KING HAD PLAYED IN THE OCTOBER EVENTS, AND THE SUBSEQUENT RESTORATION OF ORDER. I HAD STRESSED IN THE SAME DOCUMENT THAT I WAS 100 PERCENT BEHIND HIS MAJESTY'S EFFORTS TO CREATE CONSTITUTIONALISM IN THAILAND.

3. I MENTIONED THAT ONE OF THE 16 ALLEGED PLOTTERS, PRAMOTE NAKORNTAB, WAS ONE OF MY FORMER STUDENTS. THE PRIME MINISTER HAD THOUGHT ENOUGH OF HIM TO APPOINT HIM AS ONE OF THE 18 MEMBERS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL DRAFTING COMMITTEE. IN MY LONG ASSOCIATION WITH PRAMOTE, AND IN MY SEVERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH THAI PROFESSORS SINCE MY ARRIVAL, I HAD DETECTED NOTHING BUT EXPRESSIONS OF APPRECIATION OVER THE KING'S CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN THE THAI POLITICAL PROCESS.

4. THAWISAN INTERJECTED THAT HE HAD SOME CONFIRMATION THAT THESE PROFESSORS, MOST OF WHOM HAD BEEN EDUCATED IN THE U.S., WERE MEETING TO DISCUSS FUTURE GOVERNMENTS FOR THAILAND. IN THE OPINION OF SOME, THAILAND SHOULD HAVE A SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT LEANING TOWARD COMMUNISM. THEY HAD DEBATED THEREFORE WHAT TO DO WITH HIS MAJESTY UNDER SUCH A GOVERNMENT.

5. I REJOINED THAT DURING THE LAST 10 TO 15 YEARS, THAILAND HAD BEEN SENDING OUT A NUMBER OF STUDENTS FOR EDUCATION ABROAD. I ACKNOWLEDGED THAT MANY THAMMASAT AND CHULALONGKORN PROFESSORS WERE GRADUATES OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES. I SAID THAT AN AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IS AN "ELECTRIC" INSTITUTION. THERE IS A LIBERAL MARKET PLACE OF IDEAS AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM PREVAILS. THE STUDENTS WHO EMERGE FROM AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES TEND TO BE CRITICAL OF INSTITUTIONS. THEY ARE ALSO IDEALISTIC AND HUMANITARIAN. IN THEIR TWENTIES THEY FAVOR SOCIALISM AND PROGRAMS LIKE LAND REFORM AND BETTER CREDIT ARRANGEMENTS FOR FARMERS. HIS MAJESTY SHARED SOME OF THESE IDEAS. AMERICAN-TRAINED PROFESSORS THEREFORE CAN MAKE A REAL CONTRIBUTION TO THAILAND.

6. I WENT ON TO STRESS, HOWEVER, THAT FEW INDIVIDUALS PERSIST
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WITH SOCIALIST IDEALS BEYOND THEIR TWENTIES. MARXIST-LENINISM IS NOT A POPULAR PHILOSOPHY IN THE U.S. THE MAOIST-ORIENTED PROGRESSIVE LABOR MOVEMENT (PLM) HAS ABOUT 10,000 AMERICAN FOLLOWERS; AND THE SOVIET-INFLUENCED COMMUNIST PARTY (CPUSA) HAS SOME 20,000 ADHERENTS, PLUS 100,000 TO 400,000 SUPPORTERS. OF THE 30-ODD POLITICAL SCIENCE PROFESSORS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, ONLY ONE OR TWO COULD BE LABELED RADICAL. I THEORIZED THAT MOST LOCAL PROFESSORS THAT THE THAI CONSIDER RADICAL WOULD BE REGARDED CONSERVATIVE BY U.S. STANDARDS.

7. THAWISAN THEN BROUGHT UP ANOTHER RUMOR ABOUT THE U.S. HE SAID THAT MANY EDUCATED THAI BELIEVE THAT THEIR COUNTRY WILL FALL UNDER CHINESE HEGEMONY. THEY ARE CONVINCED THAT THE U.S.

HAS AN ACCORD WITH CHINA TO LET THIS HAPPEN. I ASSURED THAWISAN THAT THE U.S. HAD NO DESIRE FOR THAILAND OR FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA TO COME UNDER ANYONE'S DOMINATION. I MENTIONED THAT I HAD WRITTEN ON THIS TOPIC, AND PRESENTED HIM WITH MY MONOGRAPH OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF PRESIDENT NIXON'S VISIT TO PEKING.

8. I FURTHER ASSURED THAWISAN THAT IF ANY AMERICAN OFFICIALS GAINED INFORMATION OF PLOTS AGAINST THE KING, WE WOULD INFORM THAWISAN IMMEDIATELY. I ASKED THAT THAWISAN CONVEY TO HIS MAJESTY THE POINTS OF VIEW THAT I HAD EXPRESSED AND STATED THAT I LOOKED FORWARD TO GETTING TO KNOW HIS MAJESTY BETTER.

9. AS A SUBSIDIARY POINT, I MENTIONED THAT THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN BANGKOK MAY HAVE STIMULATED THIS RUMOR OF U.S. PLOTTING AGAINST THE KING. PERHAPS IN RESPONSE TO THIS STATEMENT, THAWISAN WAS CAREFUL TO POINT OUT TO US THAT HIS MAJESTY'S DAUGHTER WAS TAKING PIANO LESSONS FROM THE WIFE OF AN OFFICER AT THE SOVIET EMBASSY WHO HAPPENED TO BE A MEMBER OF THE GRU. DEJ TALABAT, THE THAI AMBASSADOR TO VIENNA, HAD HIGHLY RECOMMENDED THE SERVICES OF THIS WOMAN WHO WAS A PRIZE-WINNING PIANIST.

10. COMMENT: I WAS HAPPY TO HAVE THIS OCCASION TO SOOTHE THE CONCERN OF A MAN, WHO IS OBVIOUSLY QUITE CLOSE TO THE KING, ABOUT THESE OUTRAGEOUS RUMORS WHICH REFLECT THE CHARGED ATMOSPHERE OF THIS CITY. THESE WERE UNFORTUNATELY EXACERBATED BY A HEADLINE ARTICLE IN THE JANUARY 5 ISSUE OF "THE NATION" ABOUT CIA ACTIVITIES IN ANOTHER FIELD (REFERENCE). I BELIEVE THAT
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I MADE CONSIDERABLE HEADWAY IN CONVINCING THAWISAN THAT THE U.S. WAS SOLIDLY BEHIND THE KING IN IMPROVING THE DEMOCRATIC FUTURE OF THAILAND. IN THE TENUOUS BANGKOK POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE, HOWEVER, WE WILL BE FREQUENTLY TRYING TO CLEAR THE AIR OF MIASMAS OF RUMOR.
KINTNER

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

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